

Price fixing to protect the consumer: Is it a good idea?

rene R. Farroj,
the Jordan Times

Nearly 5,000 cases were reported by the Supply last year, the ministry, in an effort to stabilise prices, requested shopkeepers to affix prices to the commodities on sale. Prices in restaurants, were also fixed.

The ministry has five cars, with two price controllers in each, constantly patrolling the city. There are also price controllers in different regions.

Penalties differ from one case to the other. Usually the shop is closed for one month; in extreme

cases, it might be closed down for three months. Fines range between JD 50 and JD 200.

In case of light contraventions, the price controller serves a notice to the shopkeeper. If he is found later to persist in the contravention, he is fined. Mr. Hadid believes that penalties are effective, although not completely.

"Only limited cooperation exists between the ministry and the citizens, especially housewives. They want to be on good terms with the shopkeepers who provide them with good quality products.

Consumers should call the ministry whenever they notice any violations," he said.

Mr. Yousef Anani, head of the prices and quality control department of the Ministry of Supply, said that the ministry's main objective is to ensure the availability of all consumer items to all citizens, of good qualities and at reasonable prices after allowing for legitimate profit for the merchants.

To meet this objective, the ministry is obliged to act as the sole importer of some essential commodities, such as flour, sugar and wheat. It also acts as an importer of commodities such as meat and rice but competes with merchants on the open market in such cases. For example, when Spanish rice was being sold at 350 fils per kilo, the ministry imported Egyptian rice and sold it at 155 fils.

The ministry was also behind the establishment of the civil servants' cooperative organisations in order to reduce the financial burden on government employees whose income is limited to their salaries.

Shopkeepers who have been penalised by the Ministry of Supply for charging excessive prices believe that price fixing will not solve the problem. One shopkeeper said: "I swear, after every contravention I get I am going to raise my prices to compensate for the loss."

Another shopkeeper said: "Sometimes the ministry is right in fining those who violate the rules, but we cannot refrain from selling some items at high prices because we are concerned with providing our customers with good quality, which usually means relatively high prices."

Most greengrocers agree that grading and packing in standardised boxes is necessary if prices are to be fixed. They demand that the Ministry of Supply set fair prices, re-institute the committee entrusted with the fixing of prices (which included representatives of the Ministry of Supply, the Ministry of Agriculture and greengrocers) and finally, for the government to appoint better qualified and more experienced price controllers.

In an interview with the Jordan Times, Mr. Mohammad Ali Bdeir, Chairman of the Federation of Chambers of Commerce, said that he was a firm believer in free market conditions, where competition reduces and fixes the prices of

consumer items. He said experience has clearly shown that whenever prices are fixed, either as a result of nationalisation or to protect certain industry, prices tend to go down at the beginning, but slowly creep up as the product becomes firmly established.

Under free market conditions, whenever prices go up, there is always an entrepreneur who will attempt to capture the market by introducing a product from a new source and with a lower price, thus reducing prevailing prices, he said.

With regard to the price of foodstuffs, especially fruits and vegetables, Mr. Bdeir believes in a unified Arab market wherein such commodities are exchanged freely throughout the year, and not just on a seasonal basis. The present practice is for each country to restrict exports whenever there is a drop in the supply of the product, so as to maintain the price level and protect the consumer.

The practice is also to restrict imports to avoid a sharp drop in prices in order to protect farmers.

This stop-go policy practised by the Arab countries provides momentary relief, but adversely affects the general trend towards a unified and homogeneous price.

Mr. Bdeir believes that the rise in standards of living in Jordan is being translated into higher consumption, which in itself is forcing prices upwards.

The kitchen of the Jordan International Hotel may sound like an unusual venue for Amman's most exclusive dining club, but it was there at lunchtime on Monday that a select gathering of local gourmands was able to sample a full range of delights prepared by the experienced hand of the hotel's Executive Chef, Mr. Jaroslav Mueller. The idea for this "Chef's Table," which could become an

Amman fixture, was that of Jordan Hotel General Manager, Mr. Robert Moesker, who served as the

section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the American Ambassador, Mr. Nicholas A. Velotes; the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, Mr. Ghaleb Barakat; Mr. Moesker; Mr. Basel Jardaneh, chairman of the board of the Jordan Hotels and Tourism Company, Ltd., owners of the International; (foreground, back to camera), the Italian Ambassador, Marchese Fabrizio Rossi Longhi; and Jordan Times Editor William F. Lee. Below, Mr. Mueller welcomes Mr. Barakat and Ambassador Rossi Longhi to his kitchens.

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Flower in specially for the occasion).

In the picture above, the round

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Mr. Mueller (extreme left, in white chef's hat) are: the Romanian Ambassador, Mr. Vasile Gandilă;

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La Raffiti

Tchoukball: The 'non-aggressive' sport

LONDON, Jan. 23 (R)-These days when sport often seems like an excuse for a punch-up, the non-aggressive game of tchoukball comes as a refreshing change.

Tchoukball emphasizes team spirit and physical fitness rather than winning, according to John Andrews, general secretary of the International Tchoukball Federation.

There are nine players on a team in the international version of the game, although it can be played with six or even in pairs. A match consists of three 15-minute periods with five minutes between each period.

Under the rules of the game it is forbidden to impede the passing of

the ball and this, says Mr. Andrews, "gets rid of the vicious competition and chauvinism that spoil so many sports today."

Points are scored when the ball is thrown against an elastic tensioned net angled at 60 degrees to the court and on rebounding falls into unoccupied ground within the field of play.

The team in possession is allowed up to three passes before shooting at the net and the defending team cannot obstruct or interfere with the attack in any way.

This makes tchoukball less aggressive than most other sports, so it is ideal for mixed-sex teams and for players of differing levels of ability—and also for the physically handicapped.

The game was invented about eight years ago by the late Herman Brandt, a Swiss biologist who studied the relationship between human aggression and sport. He named it after the sound the ball makes when it strikes the tensioned net.

The tchoukball spirit of non-aggression transcends national boundaries.

After a European tournament at Cheltenham, England, in 1977 between Britain, France, Switzerland and West Germany, the teams shuffled their players and not a single foul was committed in seven hours of play with mixed-national sides.

Tchoukball is an international sport with federations in seven countries—Britain, France, West Germany, Holland, Mexico and Taiwan—and its popularity is steadily growing.

A tournament was recently held in Taiwan in which 450 players took part and it was followed by a conference attended by 167 team coaches.

Almost anyone can play their weight and ability

GOREN BRIDGE

CHARLES H. GOREN AND OMAR SHARIF

1978 by Chicago Tribune

As South, vulnerable, hold:

♦1094 ♦KQJ6 ♦AQ1054

bidding has proceeded:

♦K East South West

Pass 2 ♦ Pass

Pass ?

What do you bid now?

A.—Five diamonds. It sounds as if partner has six diamonds and only four clubs, so you should play his long suit. A cue-bid of four spades is a possibility, but we would like to have at least one honor in a minor suit for that action. We don't want to encourage partner to bid slam when we are minimum for our bidding to this point.

Q.—Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

♦9853 ♦K10 ♦AQK92 ♦72

The bidding has proceeded:

♦West North East

1 ♦ 1 ♦ Pass

2 ♦ 3 ♦ Pass

Pass 4 ♦ Pass

What do you bid now?

A.—Three diamonds. We realize this is something of an bid, but we want to leave room as possible to exact for the right contract and slant to bypass three no. It is unlikely that partner has. Since we have made a ver-one response and then i his second suit, we must a reasonable hand.

Q.—Both vulnerable, as you hold:

♦Q87 ♦K1053 ♦AKQ82

The bidding has proceeded:

♦West North East

1 ♦ 1 ♦ Pass

2 ♦ 3 ♦ Pass

Pass ?

What do you bid now?

A.—Four diamonds. It might strange to give preference a singleton when you have cards in partner's second but consider the auction must have six or seven spades and only four.

Playing a heart can repeated leads in diamonds kill the hand. With spades biding, declarer will adjust with this threat.

As South, vulnerable, hold:

♦AKQJ92 ♦Q854 ♦A6

The bidding has proceeded:

♦West North East

Pass 2 ♦ Pass

Pass 3 ♦ Pass

What do you bid now?

Your fitting honors in part-suits have increased the girth of your hand and prospects for slam are excellent—if have no more than one last losing. To get across to your concern about the and suit, we suggest a jump game to five hearts. With other bids, partner i realize exactly what your is.

Both vulnerable, as you hold:

♦J2 ♦K9 ♦A83 ♦AKQ94

The bidding has proceeded:

♦West North East

3 ♦ Pass 3 NT

What do you bid now?

Pass. Don't do anything to rob this contract. The options will certainly go down in no trump, so go ahead and your plus score. If you do, you only give them the to wriggle out into a tie contract, such as four.

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FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, JAN. 24, 1979

Your Daily HOROSCOPE

from the CARROLL RIGHTER INSTITUTE

GENERAL TENDENCIES: Although there are chances and delays occurring early in the day, they can be turned to your advantage and especially in the afternoon, evening when a smile and a word of encouragement to others can turn the tables in your favor. Fine for entertainment, romance, reconciliations.

ARIES (Mar. 21 to Apr. 19) Don't run off to a silly situation and leave important matters behind. Get a different perspective where some problem is concerned and solve it wisely.

TAURUS (Apr. 20 to May 20) Your work load is heavy, but don't let it bog you down and it soon is lighter. Don't be forceful with loved one and then all is harmonious between you.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 21) You have all kinds of annoying situations arising in the morning, but by evening everything straightens itself out. Find a wise way to please partners.

MOON CHILDREN (June 22 to July 21) An older individual could cause you delays early in the day, but later you can make up for lost time. Get ahead of the game.

LEO (July 22 to Aug. 21) Creative ideas do not go well early so concentrate on other matters. Later creativity improves. If you use patience, you can enjoy the amusement that you desire.

VIRGO (Aug. 22 to Sept. 22) Much activity at home today, both good and bad, so take it in your stride. Get an important business matter out of the way early.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22) Handle all communications well and speedily. Use care in motion and avoid costly accidents. Think along bigger lines and you can progress faster. Be kind to others.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21) You have to keep a sharp eye on your budget now, but later everything looks more prosperous for you. Set up a budget that is more workable and stick to it in the future.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21) You feel gloomy early in the day, but this soon fades and you can accomplish a good deal. Entertainment plans work out nicely.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 20) Put those new angles to work that will help you get rid of a nuisance. Get business affairs in better order.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 to Feb. 19) A good pal could be disappointing because he or she is busy with own affairs. Wait for a better time before communicating with him or her.

PISCES (Feb. 20 to Mar. 20) Make certain credit and vocational affairs are working out well and if improvements are needed, make them later. Bring talents to the attention of bigwigs.

S. Africa reacts to Israeli decision to boycott sports

JOHANNESBURG, Jan. 23 (R)-South African sports officials had mixed feelings on the Israel Olympic Committee's decision to join the sporting boycott of South Africa.

Sports Minister Frederik de Klerk said today the committee's action, disclosed last night, was "a complete surprise."

But Great Le Roux, secretary of the South African Amateur

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bidding, declarer will adjust

with this threat.

As South, vulnerable, hold:

♦AKQJ92 ♦Q854 ♦A6

The bidding has proceeded:

♦West North East

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U.S. State of Union address expected to include SALT appeal

WASHINGTON, Jan. 23 (R) — President Carter goes before Congress tonight to deliver a State of the Union address expected to include an appeal for approval of a new Strategic Arms Limitation (SALT) treaty with the Soviet Union.

Officials said he would try to overcome Senate misgivings over SALT II even before completion of the treaty by stressing that the budget he submitted yesterday increases defence spending by ten per cent to \$122.7 billion in 1980. Mr. Carter, in his speech, will discuss the need to improve relations with the Soviet Union and

the opening of normal relations with China, as well as his urgent request for congressional cooperation with his programme to control inflation.

Another key issue was how he proposed to deal with world troubles, especially the turmoil in Iran.

Mr. Carter's decision to seek support for a new SALT accord

while the United States and the Soviet Union are still haggling over final details was aimed at blunting serious reservations already voiced by some powerful senators.

Opponents of the proposed accord, which will build on the first SALT agreement signed in 1972, remain to be convinced that the president is not giving too much away to the Russians.

Mr. Carter apparently hopes that the defence portion of his overall \$531.6 billion budget will convince SALT opponents that he does not intend to permit the United States to become militarily inferior to Moscow.

In an unprecedented decision, the president decided to deliver his State of the Union address to Congress after submitting his budget. This gives him another opportunity to defend the boost in military expenditures while cutting social welfare programmes.

Opponents said he would tell Americans that the state of the union was good but there must be strong support for his austerity budget if inflation is to be controlled.

The relatively conservative Congress elected last November is expected to share Mr. Carter's mood of frugality, but several members have given notice they will try to switch money from defence to social programmes without increasing overall spending in 1980.

UAE to maintain oil output with potential for increase

ABU DHABI, Jan. 23 (R) — United Arab Emirates (UAE) petroleum and Mineral Resources Minister Mana Al Oteiba said here yesterday his country would maintain its oil production of 1.85 million barrels a day, the official Emirates News Agency reported.

Addressing a symposium on planning and economic development, being held here, the agency quoted Dr. Oteiba as saying the UAE was working to develop and improve its oilfields to face any

eventuality of increasing production in future.

He said, according to the agency, his country's crude reserves could enable it to produce 3.25 million barrels a day if required.

Speaking of last month's decision by OPEC to increase this year's oil price by 14.5 per cent, Dr. Oteiba said the decision was reasonable and would not harm world economy, the agency reported.

U.S. sues cult connected with Guyana mass suicide

WASHINGTON, Jan. 23 (R) — The U.S. Government yesterday sued the Peoples Temple of California for more than \$4.2 million to cover the cost of flying back from Guyana the bodies of more than 900 sect members who died in a mass murder suicide in November.

The suit, filed in U.S. district court in San Francisco and announced here, alleged that the leader of the church, the Rev. Jim Jones, "did intentionally, negligently or through wilful and wanton conduct abet or cause the deaths."

He — and by extension, the church he served — failed to protect church followers from unnecessary injury or death, the suit charged.

"Because of the failure of the defendant Peoples Temple... to perform its duties," the complaint said, the U.S. Government "for reasons including public health, safety and decency, did perform such acts with the intent to be paid therefore."

The costs had already passed the \$4 million mark and were expected to go higher, the suit said.

The cult leader was among the dead but the suit is likely to be challenged by his followers who remained in California when he established the Guyana commune.

Italy reports 2 more added to kidnap total

LOCRI, Italy, Jan. 23 (R) — Two separate abductions at opposite ends of Italy yesterday brought the country's kidnap total to seven in the past two weeks, police said.

Dr. Francesco Morgante, 61, chief surgeon at the state hospital in this town in the toe of Italy, was snatched by a gang waiting for him in a car as he left the hospital yesterday evening.

At almost the same moment, in the northern city of Brescia, Enrico Gnutt, 31, co-owner of a large ball-bearing factory, was abducted by four men in a car which swerved in front of him as he drove home.

Mr. Gnutt, as a wealthy industrialist, was a typical target of the professionally-organised kidnap gangs of northern Italy.

Dr. Morgante, a leading local official of the ruling Christian Democratic Party, but police believe his kidnapping was probably for ransom rather than political motivation.

By contrast with the seven abductions so far in 1979, only one person had been kidnapped by this time last year.

In the public sector, the scale of the problem, if not the detail, is already evident. Loss of export revenue from the oil industry has been costing Iran more than \$450 million a week on top of losses in the last quarter of 1978 already estimated at over \$2 billion.

Foreign exchange reserves are reported by the central bank as still over \$10 billion, but it is conceded that this is a quite artificial figure.

No payment, for example, has been needed on the estimated \$3 billion worth of imports that have accumulated at Iran's customs posts, closed by strikes for most of the last three months.

The administrative chaos caused by strikes in all government departments had built up

a backlog of payments on government business that also runs to billions of dollars, and is driving Iran towards default on its international borrowings.

Finally, allowing for the 60-90 day time lag in oil payments, Iran has been continuing to receive oil revenues in recent weeks when there have been no oil exports. But this will very shortly cease.

Even when the political crisis eases and the government can function on more than a day-to-day basis, the business community expects months of confusion while the government sorts through the tangle of unpaid bills and uncollected taxes to produce some form of budget.

Heavy-handed cuts in development spending are inevitable.

Some contracts individually worth hundreds of millions of dollars which took months of top level negotiation will be cancelled, while others will simply lie neglected.

Overall, however, this is not the main concern. In the last analysis, businessmen say, Iran is still rich in oil and other natural resources.

As long as oil is exported, they argue, the government will have large amounts of money to dispose of. Loans to the state or state companies will be repaid, if not on the original schedule, and Iran will

Weather, stoppages add to U.K. misery

LONDON, Jan. 23 (R) — Blizzard-swept Britain struggled through the grimdest day of its strike-crisis with no end in sight to weeks of industrial unrest today.

Arctic weather, a national rail strike and numerous wildcat stoppages added to the mounting misery inflicted by the lorry drivers' dispute.

Pay negotiations aimed at ending a three-week strike by truckers broke down after nine hours of discussions late last night. Both sides predicted a prolonged battle lay ahead.

Thousands of the 1.5 million low-paid workers who staged a one-day protest strike yesterday stayed away from their jobs. Ambulance services were in disarray in several parts of the country. Hundreds of schools were closed and in some areas treacherously icy highways were left ungritted.

Senior cabinet ministers met to review again whether to declare a state of emergency and call in troops to move essential supplies.

As they sat down at 10 Downing Street, there was the announcement that unemployment had soared by 90,968 during the past month to 1,455,275 — 6.1 per cent of the work force.

Many Britons found it impossible to get to their jobs. Freezing rain followed by heavy snow carpeted southern England, crippling road transport.

For the third time this month, train drivers campaigning for a ten per cent "responsibility bonus" were on a one-day strike and London's underground rail services were disrupted by the weather.

The capital's Heathrow Airport was closed most of the day by snow and Manchester Airport shut because one key worker, a watchkeeper in the fire control office, went on holiday. Unions

who are on a go-slow insisted the stoppage was not planned.

Limited ambulance services were operating in several counties and in London, drivers debated whether to call an indefinite strike.

Yesterday troops in old-fashioned army ambulances and police were mobilised to take the place of civilian drivers who refused to answer even emergency calls.

Prime Minister James Callaghan, facing the toughest crisis since he took office, once again appealed to trade unions not to fuel inflation and unemployment by making huge pay claims.

Speaking at a conference at the Trades Union Congress (TUC) headquarters, he said: "In the last analysis it is rank and file trade unionists who can ensure that we do not plunge once more into the abyss." He said some workers were asking for far more than the economy could sustain and there was a limit to what the government could do.

Employment officials said between 175,000 and 200,000 workers had been laid off because the lorry drivers' strike has throttled supply lines. They warned the figure would rise sharply this week.

The truckers — who want a 22 per cent wage rise — started unofficial action on Jan. 2 and their strike was declared official by unions nine days later. Since then more than 100,000 drivers have been striking and pickets have blockaded ports, factories and store depots.

Adding to the confusion today were a spate of unofficial stoppages by public authority employees, among them hospital porters, road workers, school caretakers and laundry staff.

World Briefs

Moroccan MP charged with drug smuggling

RABAT, Jan. 23 (R) — Seventy-eight people, including 35 parliamentarians, went on trial here yesterday on charges of major drug smuggling ring which exported over 20 tons of centred marijuana. The parliamentarian is Abdellatif Benjelloun, member for Targuit in north Morocco's Rif Mountains. Marijuana is widely grown. The prosecution alleges that the marijuana, disguised as chocolates and biscuits, was Meditteranean port of Al Hoceima in fishing boats owned by the accused.

U.S. to increase military aid to Thailand

WASHINGTON, Jan. 23 (R) — The United States has increased its military assistance to Thailand to help it combat the Vietnamese-led insurgency in Kampuchea (Cambodia). The Department said yesterday. Spokesman Hodding Carter said the United States had decided to make what he called a small \$24 million military assistance programme already in the budget year which ends on Sept. 30.

Unusual mushroom 'devours' Japanese

SAPPORO, Japan, Jan. 23 (R) — *Mérulius Lacrymans* march and bursting into tears as it eats houses on Japan's northernmost island of Hokkaido. A pest control firm called its householders to wipe out the marauding *Mérulius*, known as the tear mushroom — said it had so far damaged the mushroom, which oozes tears of wood-rotting fluid, has had a field day since 1973 oil crisis. Builders are now insulation in Japanese homes, raising the temperature-producing ideal propagating conditions.

JUMBLE

THAT SCRABBLE WORD
by Henri Amodeo

SYSAG

URROF

TORMAR

YARBEK

HOW TO GET
GOOD APPETIT
IN NO TIME

Now arrange the circles in the squares areas
indicated by the arrows.

Print answer here

Yesterday's Jumble: KETCH BRAND FABRIC PRE
Answer: Rather old-fashioned brothers
"BRETHREN"

THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
1 Eban	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
5 Puts away for later	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100				
10 Not many	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	5																																																		